

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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Whole No. 252

GREAT INVENTOR TANGLES WITH CHARLIE MILLER

The Last of the Pony Express Riders

By Charlie Duprez

alias Ima Tellinye, Nameless Joe, etc.



Charles Miller, the last of the Pony Express Riders at 103

GREAT INVENTOR TANGLES WITH CHARLIE MILLER

The Last of the Pony Express Riders

First—just who is this great inventor. Well boys, fellers, most of you have met him, this modern Thos. Edison in the pages of good old Roundup. In jail he was No. 45675, but in the Roundup the number was lowered to No. 10. Quite a come down. True, for some reason or nuther you won't find him listed in Who's Who. Tis none other than Grandpaw G. Fred Orphal. I have met the galoot on many occasions. In Roundup No. 230, article, Happy Hours Brotherhood on the Loose, gives a fair account describing one of his many brain waves. The ideas that feller has in making his home into a farm for gadgets, tis unbelievable. Some of them are out of this world—where they should be, yet others rate a big income on the open market, all they need is some poor sucker to finance them. It's just too bad he didn't go in for building a better mouse trap. I'll have to do a complete story sometime on just G. Fred. He rates such publicity.

I once asked him what the heck the G. stands for. His reply, and I quote. "Charlie, it stands for a name I won't stand for. My name is Orphal enough," I overlooked the pun. When he told me, frankly no one could blame him, and I'm honor bound never to divulge it in case some lunkhead might sometime pass it on to a defenseless infant.

Now we come to the real hero of our story, good old Charlie Miller.

Charlie is the very last living member of those daring Pony Express Riders. Better known as Broncho Charlie Miller, he is now 103 years old, and still hale and hearty. According to Fred's notations, (let's skip the G.) Charlie feels that in another fifty years he may slow up a bit.

In the N. Y. Daily News, dated Oct. 10th, 51, Fred saw an article about Broncho Charlie, mentioned where he lived, and that right close by to where Fred lived as a boy—and revealed in his dime novels. Leave it to Fred to get in touch, was invited to come over, and he spent a very pleasant hour talking with Charlie and taking down notations for future reference. No thought of the Roundup at the time. Was invited to come again, which he did and then got the idea you fellers might be interested. The tales Charlie told him were quite as thrilling as any you fellers have read in your novels. In Charlie you have a real live Frontiersman, Hunter, and Indian fighter.

Fred being on the shady side of seventy, meeting Charlie, old enough to be his Pappy was all out for buying himself a three wheel bike to ride around on, or casting his B. V. D.'s aside for a set of diapers. But let's get back to the real hero of our story.

Broncho Charlie lives in a very comfortable home, been there going on 11 years, a home devoted to quite a few inmates who just AINT spring chickens any more. From his over-

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stuffed chair he often gazes out the window at the few remaining horses that pass by, all tied up tight to either an ice wagon or a vegetable cart. Often the urge has been upon him, grab one of those nags and head back to California, a ride he once took from Patchogue, L. I., to San Francisco. Another item about this stunt further on in this article.

The Pony Express operated for a little over a year, starting in July, 1860. Service was discontinued in November of the following year due to the telegraph having finally reached across the continent.

When asked about what he considered one of his many outstanding adventures, he reeled off one—and I quote, "I still recall my third trip for the company (Pony Express) when I rode the 100 mile stretch from Sacramento, Cal., to Carson City, Nev. During this trip I changed horses 18 times and forded two rivers. I was riding through a canyon when a band of 11 Crow Indians attacked me from the canyon rim. An arrow creased my eye, the arrow also creased my wrist, sticking there, see I carry the scar to this day. However I managed to elude them by leading my horse up a slight trail away from the canyon rim, while they waited for me at the mouth of this canyon." As Charlie gave descriptive details he kept puffing away at his cigarettes. "It was little incidents like that," he concluded, "that kinda kept a feller on his toes." He didn't mean that literally, as who can keep on his toes when astride a horse.

"Later I learned that they followed my tracks to the next station, and burned the place to the ground after killing the two men stationed there."

From infancy he was always a great lover of horses. In fact he doesn't think any other animal can come up to a horse. I however dispute that claim, I have seen other animals come up to a horse—take a look and walk the other way. Had to get that crack in.

Charlie was especially fond of wild horses, breaking many in his time. Even today he can not stand the sight of a bottle of glue knowing its main

ingredients are from the species.

Fred tells me he just sat there with mouth agape listening, his upper plate bouncing around like a Mixmaster at work. Charlie has a very keen sense of humor, proven by his statement regarding the glue, that it's all right for a man to stick to his horse, but not the horse sticking to something else.

Fred's second meeting was in February of last year. On this visit he had more time and decided to kill two birds with one stone, see Charlie and look over the old neighborhood. Charlie looked a lot better to him than the neighborhood. Seems since he lived around there the population had increased a bit, a few more houses added, the cow pasture gone, even the cows. Plenty dirty kids messing around lousing up the scenery, if you can call it scenery. In fact Fred would never have recognized the old place if it had not been for the sign posts. In his day it was inhabited by some very aristocrooked people. Since then Fred has moved many many times, always found it cheaper than paying rent—so he tells me.

Not far from there, Cooper Square, is where Lincoln made a famous speech. He sent me a detailed map with many notations, but as these bear nothing of interest except those familiar with N. Y. as it was, I will omit.

Seems one of the fair sex visited Charlie one day for a story and was so intrigued that she wrote a book about his life called "Saga of the Saddle", long out of print. Her name, Gladys Erskine. You might find one if interested, in your public library. It is filled with many illustrations, all of which, or most of them, by Brown Bros. of N. Y., who have one of the largest collections of photographs in the United States. Might as well get a plug in here for them as I worked for Brown Bros. many years as a news photographer—until I got smart, or thought so, and branched out for myself.

Back to Fred's notations. Good thing he does short hand to keep up with Charlie.

When Charlie emerged from his

comfortable resting place, nine months to the day from the time his Pappy had a naughty gleam in his eye, he landed on a Buffalo rug. Swell place to be born. This may account for the fact that so many doting Mommas had their nude infants photographed on a bear skin rug, a Buffalo rug not being available. The rug had been laid out for the event at a settlement called Hat Creek, Modoc County, California, Jan. 1st, 1850. Today no doubt the creek is still there, but the town under another name, with automobiles running over the famous spot.

His father prior to this time lived on a farm, 1849, at Versailles, Kentucky. Then pulled out by covered wagon, with oxen as the motive power over the Oregon Trail to St. Joseph, Missouri. This trip Charlie doesn't remember much about as he was still to be heard from with yowls, wails and horseback riding.

Charlie must have matured in double quick time because he was only ten starting on the Pony Express. Seems kinda incredible, but as stated, the service discontinued 1861, he being born 1850 it just has to be true. I doubt if the kids today could equal that. The wonderful things he did all through his later life, well I'm not surprised.

When a Pony Express Rider took the oath, he was presented with a small leather covered bible, and a six shooter. I next come to some notations describing some photos contained in Saga of the Saddle. Fred went to the library got out the book and saw them, but stuck to the tales Charlie told him, checking many items for verification.

Here are some of the illustrations:

Buffalo Bill, 1859, Charlie not visible, so perhaps Charlie was behind the camera.

Mountain Massacre, Sept. 10, 1859. No Charlie.

Charlie with a roan stallion called Starlight. This poor animal had to be destroyed due to a broken leg.

Charlie with Jim Bridger, 1886, only known photo of Jim Bridger.

Notation. Jim taught all he knew to Kit Carson, told Charlie he looked a lot like Kit, due no doubt to both

wearing coonskin hats.

Then Charlie goes to N. Dakota where he meets Gen. Custer. June, 1876, the year of the big battle of the Big Horn. Whether Charlie horned in on this, no mention, no doubt he didn't or else he wouldn't be living in N. Y. today.

Photo, Charlie with heap big Indian Chief Joseph and Gen. O. O. Howard, a one armed veteran, this at Yucca, 1896.

A map, drawn by Charlie of the West. He'd never know the old place now.

In 1887 Charlie sells wild horses he had broken to the U. S. Cavalry, gets job at six dollars per day around Salmon River as Dispatch Rider.

Meets Gen. Miles. Also Dispatch Rider for Lt. Hugh L. Scott, Madison River Valley near the Canadian border. Not being so hot on my American History (Brother Leithead couldn't go to town there) can't seem to place that Scott feller. Nor Chief Joseph either. Same notation states Joe passed on to Happy Hunting Grounds, 1904. Well Joe hadda go sometime, so why not 1904?

Now here's where Charlie got himself into a bit of a stew. Took over a job taking care of cattle, replacing a man who had imbibed a wee bit too much for his own good, and the Boss. The thirsty one was quite perturbed when presented with the pink slip and threatened to shoot Charlie on sight. He caught up with our Charlie, guns blazed, Charlie came out top man. He was hauled up before a Sheriff's Jury, but was exonerated. Goody for you Charlie, Merriwell would have done the same thing.

Next he drove a stage coach at Deer Lodge, Mont., over Lost Dog Creek Trail. That Charlie feller sure got around.

In the dead of winter drives stage coach bound for Butte, Montana. Seated at his side a Wells Fargo Express Messenger who carried a Henry rifle. Charlie a pair of 44s. They often drove in 30 to 40 below zero, and to keep warm wore heavy boots with blankets wound around their legs.

Again at Butte, he tangles with a

gun slinger who wounds him in the leg. Charlie a better shot sent the gentleman on his way to Boot Hill where no doubt he still reposes, boots and all.

Meets Gen. Grant who had just returned from China, 1879.

Meets Bat Masterson, Calamity Jane and Wild Bill Hickok at Abilene, Kansas.

Seems in Kansas at the time prohibition was afoot. Many who craved this delicious beverage called red eye managed to get some. Speakeasies being unheard of, here's how it was done. Drug stores were the outlet. They sold bibles, of all things, all pages removed and in their place the nectar. What a lot of religion those fellers must have had.

In 1884 he meets Teddy Roosevelt at Mendota, N. Dakota. Teddy bawled him out for beating a horse. Had it been Frankie Merriwell or Fred Fearnot he no doubt would have had more than a bawling out. After this verbal chastisement Charlie was more than kind to animals.

Out West where so many Chinamen were, he found them most honest, in fact they were often given jobs as cashiers.

In 1885 joined Buffalo Bill for his Wild West Show. The show rehearsed on Staten Island, N. Y. The show was to leave for England to appear before Queen Victoria at the Jubilee. Before leaving, a wild steer had broken loose on 11th Avenue in N. Y. City. Charlie roped the animal very easily—it says here.

In the show to go abroad on a world tour were 40 cowboys, including some girls, 300 horses, 3 covered wagons, 1 stage coach, the original Deadwood Stage Coach, 100 Indians with their Squaws and pap-oo-zees. When the show appeared in England, seated next to Queen Victoria was the grand old man of China, Le Hung Chang.

Charlie remained with the show until 1887. Chang was a great friend of Gen. Grant and planted some rare Ginko trees in back of Gen. Grant's tomb.

According to a clipping from the London Penny Illustrated Paper, dat-



Charles Miller and Brother G. Fred Orphal

ed Nov. 19th, 1887, on a horse Charlie raced against a cyclist for six days. The bike rider rode inside a circus-like ring while Charlie rode around the outside of the ring. There is a photo of the event in Saga of the Saddle taken from an old circus poster. Charlie covered 407 miles, his competitor 422. Whether the same horse was used for the six days, most likely not, it doesn't say. This may have been the forerunner of the six day bike races we had in Madison Square Garden some years ago.

In 1890 Charlie hears the call of the wild and marries Carrie Potter. A son was born who was christened Dewey, and a daughter Mary. Both at this time live in or near Glens Falls, N. Y.

Joins Pawnee Bill's Show 1905.

With Thurston's Magic Show, doing a turn with a 30 foot bull whip.

Now Fred skips to where this wonderful man gets religion. Joins the Salvation Army, and with bible in hand preaches in saloons, etc., in place of the six shooter. At this time he was in Glens Falls, was invited by Evangeline Booth the head of the Army to attend an important meeting in N. Y. City. So mounted on a trusty steed he wearing his western apparel

rode the 202 odd miles, just a ride around the block for Charlie.

Helen Gould donated \$1,000.00 to the meeting so it must have been in a worthy cause. Helen called Charlie the converted cowboy.

In 1912 Charlie heard that Teddy Roosevelt was to lead a Bull Moose parade in Albany, N. Y. He volunteered to go into the parade, however before it took place Teddy Roosevelt was shot in Milwaukee, Wisc., therefore of course unable to attend. The powers that be at Albany wired to Charlie, would he please take his place at the head in Teddy's place. Would he? Decked out in chaps, a six gallon hat, \$60.00 boots, his hair spread over his shoulders, rode his best horse behind the band. What a picture that must have been.

Then came the dreaded World War 1. 1916 and 17 found Charlie riding hundreds of miles, standing on street corners recruiting. He volunteered to serve, but was told he was too old. He claimed that at 68 he could keep up with the best of them. I wouldn't doubt it. So in the U. S. no army service, BUT in Canada the age limit was 44. Up to Canada goes Charlie, states he is just 44, liar that he was, but in a good cause. The Doctors examined him, his eyesight perfect, had the body of a forty year old, and hard as nails. When asked where he came from—ye answer—Calgary, Alberta. Not doubting him he was accepted and sailed from Halifax on the Caledonia Castle for England. Got into Queen Mary's own 18th Hussars. His captain, Sir Wm. Burns, no relation to Bill Burns up in Rockland, knew all about Charlie, but not being a woman managed to keep his trap shut. Hope my wife can't see that crack or World War 3 will be on tap.

In 1919 he received his honorable discharge. Fighting the Heinies was nothing to Charlie compared to the Indians.

Resting a while, and no doubt panting at the bit, where many others at his age were peacefully slumbering under the daisies, here's what happened next.

1931. He is now 81. On the old Vanderbilt estate at Oakdale, L. I., he

cut down trees and built himself a log cabin. Again to horse, life was entirely too peaceful there.

On July 6th, mounted on his horse Pole Star, bearing a letter from Mayor Walker of N. Y. City, leaves Pat-chogue, L. I., to deliver the letter to Mayor Russie of San Francisco. A mere 3500 odd miles. Durnd if he didn't make it too, while 2 much younger men tried it in 1926 and failed, the horses just didn't like the distance. A canter around Central Park was more their idea of fun.

En Route to San Francisco he visited Pawnee Bill for old times sake in Oklahoma. On this, his last real long trip his horse was shod 23 times, wonder how many pairs of shoes Payson Weston wore out when he did it afoot years ago?

Well boys, if any of your dime novel heroes can beat Charlie's record, I haven't read any that did. Brother Leithead, well he read so many going by his articles, maybe he ran across something better.

I trust these highlights on Charlie's wonderful career gathered with Fred's big help has been of interest.

LATER. To those who have read the foregoing article and were interested I wish to conclude with a follow up. I wrote the article quite a while before the photographs were taken, at the time was not sure arrangements could be made for such a purpose. All I had to go on was Fred's notations which Charlie told him about. The description of photos contained in Saga of the Saddle of course were by seeing the book.

So Fred the GREAT Inventor made a date and we both went over, camera, flash and all. We were very cordially received by the lady in charge, did not get her name, she really deserves honorable mention here. They summoned Charlie and in a few moments he appeared and was as nice a fellow as you would want to meet. A perfect gentleman. His mind quite bright and most congenial. He invited us into his room, and there we sat pow wow-ing for over an hour. Rest assured I checked up on the notations Fred had made during his previous two visits

and according to Charlie it was all correct. In between I posed the two photos Eddie has placed before you. Charlie would have posed for anything I asked, but knowing the Roundup does not have the space for a lot of photos we picked the two we thought of the most interest.

One of my questions was, Charlie, I see you smoke cigarettes, don't they bother you? His answer, "Why I've smoked the greater part of my life, smoke at least a package a day." This amazed me as although I smoke them, always found they are just no good for anyone. Frank Merriwell taught me that, so I'm wondering would Frank have reached 103 without smoking.

Another question I asked, "Just what do you do all day Charlie besides smoking to amuse yourself. For an answer he reached into his clothes closet and withdrew an old canvas bag, therefrom he extracted an ordinary saw, next came a stick with a knob on the end. With the saw and wooden hammer he played us several tunes, and darn good too.

Charlie says he never drank to any extent, if he had I'm sure he would never have lived to the age of 103. That stuff in excess can kill you quicker than nicotine. A proven fact.

Regarding his son Dewey, he is still going strong, also his sister Mary, both living in or near Glens Falls, N. Y.

Another item Charlie told me was how at Oakdale, L. I., on the old Vanderbilt estate he had built his own log cabin. Remember he was in his eighties. Cut down the trees and without help of any kind built the entire structure himself. Well anything he did didn't surprise me in the least. Broncho busting at eight years of age, heck what a man. Unfortunately his hearing is somewhat impaired, but when one speaks in a tone above normal he hears quite well. He can only see out of one eye, this is not noticeable, and to strain it any more than necessary the good lady in charge reads to him. They all seem very fond of him at the home, and no wonder. Personally I got quite a thrill photographing this man, and considering

the many celebrities I have photographed in my many years as a news photographer, well he kinda stood out. So if you fellers are interested, and Eddie Le Blanc can only go by your letters to find out what you do want in the Roundup, write in, and I'll try to get over there, make a few more pictures and give added details to some of his true adventures. Nothing he said seemed in the least boastful, although I wouldn't blame him to brag a bit, but not Charlie, you had to kind of drag the stories from him. So fellow members, I leave you, and for those who care for any more of my hocus articles will get busy and keep Eddie supplied. He has in store for you some very interesting items and he wants to cater to all tastes, be it circus, just dime novels or what have you. Watch out for Hon. Leithhead's forthcoming article on the old mellowdramas that we used to applaud when the hero saved his gal, smacked the villain, etc., a la Frank Merriwell.

Seems this article, pictures, etc., all had to be gathered in sections. Anyway after sending Eddie Le Blanc everything, only this morning received a very friendly letter from Charlie's son Dewey to whom I had written for a few further facts. I give you his letter herewith.

Mr. Charlie Duprez,

I trust you haven't thought ill of me for not writing sooner. It may seem strange to you to know that my Dad has many articles, clothing, relics, etc., of which I am not familiar, in fact some of the things here, packed in boxes I have never seen. I never knew the story about that coat, so had to write to him, you probably know he cannot see to read or write so has someone do this for him. This coat—as I got it from a letter written for Dad was made for him by an Indian Squaw and her daughter at Rogen, Colorado, when my Dad was 18 years old. The husband of the Squaw was named Coloraw, he was some sort of Chief, took a liking to Dad. Hence the coat. My Dad was breaking horses at that time for a couple of men from Kentucky, named

Wall and Widew. Some time after that he went to Denver.

Now to answer your question as to Dad's riding the Pony Express. This is not the first time I have had to explain this. First may I say that I have a complete list, printed of all the Pony Express Riders—and the name of Dad is on the list. Also I have a letter—To whom it may concern, signed by Green Majors, who is the son of Russell, Majors and Waddell, founders of the Pony Express, and worded as follows:

"It was a very agreeable surprise to me when Mr. Chas. Miller of the Pony Express, an old time Pony Express Rider, 82 years of age blew in to my office a few days ago.

"We had chats over old times. He was familiar from personal contact

with many early Western historical facts, of which I also knew of.

"Treat him kindly in harmony with his own admirable disposition and oblige,

"Sincerely yours, (signed) Green Majors, son of Alexander Majors, owner of old overland Pony Express of 1860"—Unquote.

The Pony Express was in operation for some little time before Dad was one of the riders, I believe he was 11 years old when he rode them. Suggest you read Dad's book, *Saga of the Saddle*, pages 28 through 60.

Thank you for the photos of Dad. I have not seen him for two years and a photo of him as he is now very much appreciated.

Cordially yours
(signed) Dewey Miller.

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